

April 16, 2014

Hillary Roverud
Development Services Director
City of South Lake Tahoe Representative to Advisory Planning Commission TRPA
City of South Lake Tahoe
1052 Tata Lane
South Lake Tahoe, CA, 96150

Regarding the Draft Negative Declaration for the proposed demolition of the Barton Ranch Complex:

Dear Ms. Roverud,

The Lake Tahoe Historical Society (LTHS) is responding to the Draft Negative Declaration for the proposed demolition of the Historic Barton Ranch Complex. The declaration was prepared by Midkiff and Associates for William Mosher and submitted to the City of Lake Tahoe, California, dated December 13, 2013.

The LTHS does not believe sufficient time has been allowed for informed community response to the negative declaration and requests the comment period be extended until August 25, 2014, an additional four months. The extension would allow sufficient time for public review of the adverse conditions described in the draft and opportunities for parties interested in preserving the site to present their concerns.

- The required public notice appeared in the Tahoe Daily Tribune, page 26, on March 28, 2014. The public notice was not accompanied by any other notice or article in any other local newspaper. Unless a person was a regular reader of the Tribune's Legal Notice section, they would not have seen the notice. The LTHS only became aware of the notice when a concerned community member pointed it out to the Chair of the LTHS Historic Sites Committee, who then notified the LTHS board of directors.

It seems to the LTHS, a public notice of the demolition of historic structures of such importance to the Lake Tahoe community would have included a press release providing more information about the project and therefore more opportunities for public comment. It was not until the Lake Tahoe News ran a story about the project more than a week later, on April 9, 2014, that the project became public. The proposal to demolish the ranch complex is deserving of greater public review than sixteen days.

It should be noted that on page 14, Section A, of the discussion of Cultural Resource impact, it is stated, "there has been no success identifying anyone interested in taking the buildings and moving them to another site or rehabilitating them for adaptive use." The LTHS contacted Mr. Mosher via an intermediary on January 22, 2014, to request a meeting of the LTHS board and the property owners to

discuss options that might be available and arrange a site visit to further evaluate the options. The request was denied, via the intermediary.

Mr. Midkiff told the Lake Tahoe News in the April 9 2014 story that he contacted the LTHS three or four years ago to offer the buildings for removal or relocation. The then President, Vice-President, and another board member do not recall Mr. Midkiff contacting the LTHS, nor has Mr. Midkiff made any recent attempts to contact the LTHS.

The LTHS is asking these questions:

- Has the presence of hazardous materials been evaluated by a qualified professional? Are the materials present in a quantity of such significance to require a HazMat style cleanup or simply in quantities that would be expected in older construction?
- Would a presence at the property remedy the concerns concerning vagrants, abandoned autos, and graffiti at the ranch as it has at the nearby Bonanza Park?
- The owners state on page 14 that they do not believe a museum on the property is consistent with the "vision of the community." That statement is not consistent with notes from a Lake Valley Area Plan public meeting where it was suggested the property be turned into a museum. A comment responding to the Lake Tahoe News article also suggested the property be turned into a park or museum. Can the owners present data to support their statement?
- Would the California Tahoe Conservancy (CTC) be willing and able to trade a suitable commercial property for the ranch?
- At what point does the TRPA become involved as they have already given historical status to the Barton Ranch property?

The LTHS respectfully requests the Planning Commission to grant an extension to August 25, 2014 for public comment to provide the community sufficient time to become informed about the details of the project and perhaps present options to preserve the historic property.

Sincerely,

Catherine Whelan
President
Lake Tahoe Historical Society